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ABSTRACT

The history of the National Council on Measurement in Education (NCME) is discussed. The organization was founded in February 1938 when 45 college teachers and 12 persons from state departments of education or public schools adopted a constitution for the National Association of Teachers of Educational Measurement. The revised constitution of 1943 changed the name to the National Council on Measurements Used in Education. By 1952, the membership of 495 had sharpened its interest in test use, with a revised constitution that listed dissemination as its first purpose and the promotion of improvement of techniques second. In 1960, the organization adopted its present name. A striking change came in February, 1964 with establishment of the "Journal of Educational Measurement." Membership increased between September 1964 and December 1965 from 1,146 to 2,060. The decade of the sixties saw large increases in funding for educational research and testing. At its February 1968 meeting the Board of Governors approved a committee recommendation that the NCME be incorporated. The Bylaws of 1969 returned to the order of the original constitution and placed the scientific advancement of the field before the dissemination of knowledge about measurement. The 1970's were generally dedicated to the pursuit of these two goals. By 1981, the NCME's membership had reached a peak of 2,321. The journal "Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice" was established in the early 1980's by the merging of the journals "Measurement News" and "Measurement in Education" and was a clear indication of the maturity and status that the NCME had achieved. (SLD)

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PAST PRESIDENTS' COMMITTEE: A LOOK AT THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF NCME

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1. A Look at the Past[1]

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Before we consider future plans for NCME, it's a good idea to look at what NCME has been doing in the past and what it is doing now. We don't want to repeat mistakes of the past or neglect responsibilities of the present. As one of the older members of NCME, I've been assigned the task of providing the backward look. In doing so, I've discovered some things I didn't already know, I've corrected some faulty memories, and I've gained some new insights I'd like to share with you.

I first became a member of NCME in 1953 . At that time, the Council was already 15 years old, had undergone a name change, and had clarified somewhat its purposes. As indicated in an historical note in the *Ninth Yearbook* (National Council on Measurements Used in Education [NCMUE],1952), the organization was founded in February 1938 when a small group of college teachers of educational measurement adopted a Constitution for the National Association of Teachers of Educational Measurement. That constitution (White,1941) included a statement of purposes as follows:

> The purposes are the improvement of the techniques now in use for measuring achievement and personality, the development of new methods of measuring within those fields, to aid in disseminating among educators a knowledge of the procedures necessary for the correct intrerpretations, and justifiable uses of the results of the various means of measuring achievement and personality (p.29).

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[1] Paper given at the NCME invited symposium, *Past Presidents Committee: A Look at the Past,I Present and Future of NCME*, San Francisco, March 30, 1989.

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It also provided for three classes of members, active, associate, and honorary. Active membership was limited to individuals actively engaged in educational work, but others interested in promoting the objectives of the Association might apply for associate membership. Annual dues for active and associate members was set at $1.00. Honorary members were to pay no dues.The membership list included 57 names.

The membership of the new organization soon realized that the name of the Association reflected neither the nature of the membership nor its purposes. Hence, a revised constitution in I943 provided for the name to be The National Council on Measurements Used in Education. Although the word *used* was chosen purposely, the purposes stated in the original constitution, which mentioned improvement of techniques before correct interpretation and use, were included in the I943 revision with only minor changes in wording (NCMUE, I950).

Of the 57 members listed in the first yearbook, 45 were college teachers of educational measurement and 12 were from state departments of education or public schools. By 1952 the membership had grown to 495 and apparently the focus on test use had sharpened, for a revised constitution (NCMUE,I952) listed dissemination as the first purpose and promotion of improvement of techniques second:

> Purposes: The purposes of the Council shall be:
>
> (1) To disseminate among educators an increased knowledge of the techniques and instruments available for the measurement of human abilities, personality characteristics, and education achievement, and of the procedures appropriate for the interpretation and use of such instruments.
>
> (2) To promote the improvement of the measurement techniques and instruments in these areas and of the procedures used in their administration, scoring, and interpretation (p.xiv).

The revised constitution also provided for raising the annual dues from $1.00 to $2.00!

Throughout the 1950's the membership remained about 500 and the major activities of the Council were the conducting of an annual meeting and the publication of the papers of the meeting in the annual *Yearbook*. The annual meeting was held concurrently with the American Educational Research Association and the American Association of School Administrators. Some of the paper sessions were joint with one or the other.(Huddleston, l959).

By 1957 it became obvious that there was need for more adequate communication, and a quarterly newsletter was created. The *Newsletter* documents changes in the organization during the sixties. In an early issue, President Victor Noll wrote, "NCMUE is the only organization so far as I know whose sole concern is the educational use of measurement. In fact, it is the only organization of its kind, period" (Noll, 1958) The same issue of the *NCMUE Newsletter* noted a total membership of 508 distributed as follows: Colleges and universities 261, public schools 104, testing organizations 58, government 11, independent schools 3, miscellaneous l2, not given 59.

Two years later, President Engelhart (1960) was noting that the Council's purpose of dissemination of information about the appropriate use of tests was not being achieved. He wrote

> From its founding, the major goal of NCMUE has been promotion of wise use of tests and of test data in schools and colleges.....We should be concerned about the widespread adoption of tests with little evaluation of their compatability with curriculum objectives and about the uncritical appraisal of educational achievement where tests are thus selected. We should also be concerned about interpretation of test results for individual pupils where there is little understanding of the limitations of the scores (p.1).

Apparently, the leadership of the Council was committed to improvement of test use, but already steps were being taken that would eventually change somewhat the emphasis of the Council.

In 1960 the name of the Council was changed to The National Council on Measurement in Education (NCMUE Newsletter 3[1], 1960; NMCE Newsltter 3[2], October 1960) The word *Used* would no longer be in the title to remind the membership of the central focus,and a few months later President Dressel (1961, April) was providing a subtle change in emphasis, noting that NCME was the only organization that "has taken as its sole field of concern the quality and the range of tests in the educational world"(p.1).

I can find no mention in NCME records of the Soviet launching of Sputnik, but the educational ferment stimulated by that event undoubtedly had an effect on the Council if only through an increased emphasis on the evaluation of educational programs. In February l964, when the membership voted to establish a new *Journal of Educational Measurement* to take the place of the annual *Proceedings* the membership had grown to 881 (*NCME Newsletter*, 1964, May).

The advent of the *Journal of Educational Measurement* marked a striking change in NCME. The January l966 issue of the *Newsletter* (Vol.9, No.1) notes that *JEM* was now to be published four times a year and was to be typeset, and that membership had increased between September l964 and December l965 from 1146 to 2060. The effect on attendance at the annual meetings may be inferred from the announcement that in l966 there would be three regional meetings and that rooms at the Hilton Inn in San Francisco were available at single rate $13.50, double $17.50!

To some extent, the growth in membership, particularly from college and university faculties,may be attributable to the addition of *JEM* as a prequisite of membership (Womer, l969). But other influences were also focusing attention on educational measurement. No longer were tests primarily the tools to provide feedback to teachers and administrators in individual schools; rather, they were becoming devices for the exercise of power by those wishing to influence education more broadly. The decade of the sixties saw large increases in funds to support educational research and testing, and the leadership of NCME

responded accordingly. President Tom Hastings("Statement of Presidnet Hastings,"1968) issued a challenge early in his term: "Shall NCME take a place of leadership in the total establishment, or shall it follow the changes which are effected by other organizations and agencies?.....We cannot retain a private view of testing and measurement, keep a low dues rate, and talk only to each other"(pp.5-6). At its February 1968 meeting, the Board of Governors approved the recommendations of a committee that (1) NCME be incorporated, (2) that offices of secretary and treasurer be combined, (3) that Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws be amended accordingly, (4) that dues be set no lower than $5.00 nor higher than $10.00, and (5) that a vote on these recommendations be taken (*NCME Newsletter*, 11[3],1968].

Within the next year the recommended changes were made. NCME was incorporated, a set of Bylaws (1972) provided details of organization and operation, and actions were taken to focus more clearly on NCME goals. The decisions are summarized in a message of President Womer in the *Newsletter* of June l969. Reviewing activities during the rapid period of growth of the early sixties, Womer wrote: "In this growth period, NCME's officers and board members continued to pay lip service to the goals of 'use' and 'application' in measurement. In actuality, however, both the annual meeting and *JEM* gave much greater emphasis to theory than to practice. " To meet the challenge, Womer (1969) reported, the Board was planning the following: (1) Maintenance of JEM. (2) Transformation of the *Newsletter* into "an item that the director of testing in a school system will look to as his primary resource publication." (3) Appointment of a Publications Committee "charged with the task of exploring the entire field of publications aimed specifically at the measurement practitioner, the user of educational measurement." (4) Exploraion of ways NCME might expand its program activities to organizations other than AERA. (5) "To actively seek membership from *all* groups who use measurement techniques in an educational setting. The Board feels that there is a great need for non-measurement specialists to join together with the measurement specialist in an organization with the single-minded goal of improving the application and use of good measurement techniques in education." (6) Exploration of the possibility of developing an NCME Public Policy Board.

Obviously, there was a recognition of the importance of attending to the ways in which tests were used as well as to encouraging developments in theory and test development, but the Bylaws of 1969 returned to the order of the original constitution, placing the scientific advancement of the field of eductional measurement before the dissemination of knowledge about measurement. And later revisions have kept that order. The Bylaws as amended in 1969,1972,1973,1975,1977 (National Council, 1983) reads:

ARTICLE I

Name and Purposes

Section 1. The name of this organization shall be the National Council on Measurement in Education, Inc.

Section 2. The organization is incorporated under the laws of the District of Columbia pursuant to the Articles of Incorporation filed in 1968.

Section 3. The organization is incorporated exclusively for scientific, educational, literary, and charitable purposes. Its purposes shall include:

(a) Encouragement of scholarly efforts to:
advance the science of measurement in the field of education;
improve measurement instruments and procedures for their administration, scoring interpretation, and use; and
improve applications of measurement in assessments of individuals

(b) Dissemination of knowledge about:
theory, techniques, and instrumentation available for measurement of educationally relevant human institutional and social characteristics;
procedures appropriate to the interpretation and use of such techniques and instruments; and applications of educational measurement in individual and group evaluation studies (p.5).

The decade of the 1970's may be characterized as one dedicated to the pursuit of the double objectives of scientific advancement and dissemination of information about the proper use of measurement in education. The actions of the Board reported in 1969

by Frank Womer led to the creation of two publications, *Measurement News*, a successor to the *Newsletter* but expanded to include news about measurement in general and *Measurement in Education* , a series of special quarterly reports concerned with emphasis on uses of measurement rather than technical or theoretical issues.The *Journal of Educational Measurement* continued to cover the latter.

The extent of the growth in the activities of the Council during the 1970's is documented in a report of the president in the spring of l981 (Lennon). By that time membership had reached a peak of 2321. The annual meeting included 45 sessions. A committee was at work reviewing publication activity and considering the possibility of combining *Measurement News* and *Measurement in Education* into a single publication that could carry the messages of the Council to a wider audience. A Training and Professional Development Committee was involved in arranging training sessions as part of the annual meeting and in planning the development of training materials and programs intended to help non-NCME members improve their measurement knowledge and skills. The Council was actively involved with the Committee on Evaluation Standards, the Joint Committee on Revision of the Test Standards, the National Consortium on Testing, and the Advisory Committee for the Buros Mental Measurements Institute.The Board had approved the establishment of an awards program to honor outstanding examples of the application of measurement technology to a specific problem and of the dissemination of educational measurement concepts to the public. And the Board had developed and distributed a statement on admissions testing, intended for the guidance of state or federal legislators considering so-called "truth-in-testing" legislation. No longer was the Council a group of school and college teachers talking among themselves. Rather, it was deeply involved with the whole educational public and with political as well as scholarly activity.

The pattern of council activities for the first half of the 1980's had been established. The next year saw the merging of *Measurement News* and *Measurement in Education* into *Educational Measurement, Issues and Practice*, a journal designed to cover such a broad perspective (Cole, 1980; Womer, 1982). The Council had obviously acheved maturity and developed an authoritative status.

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